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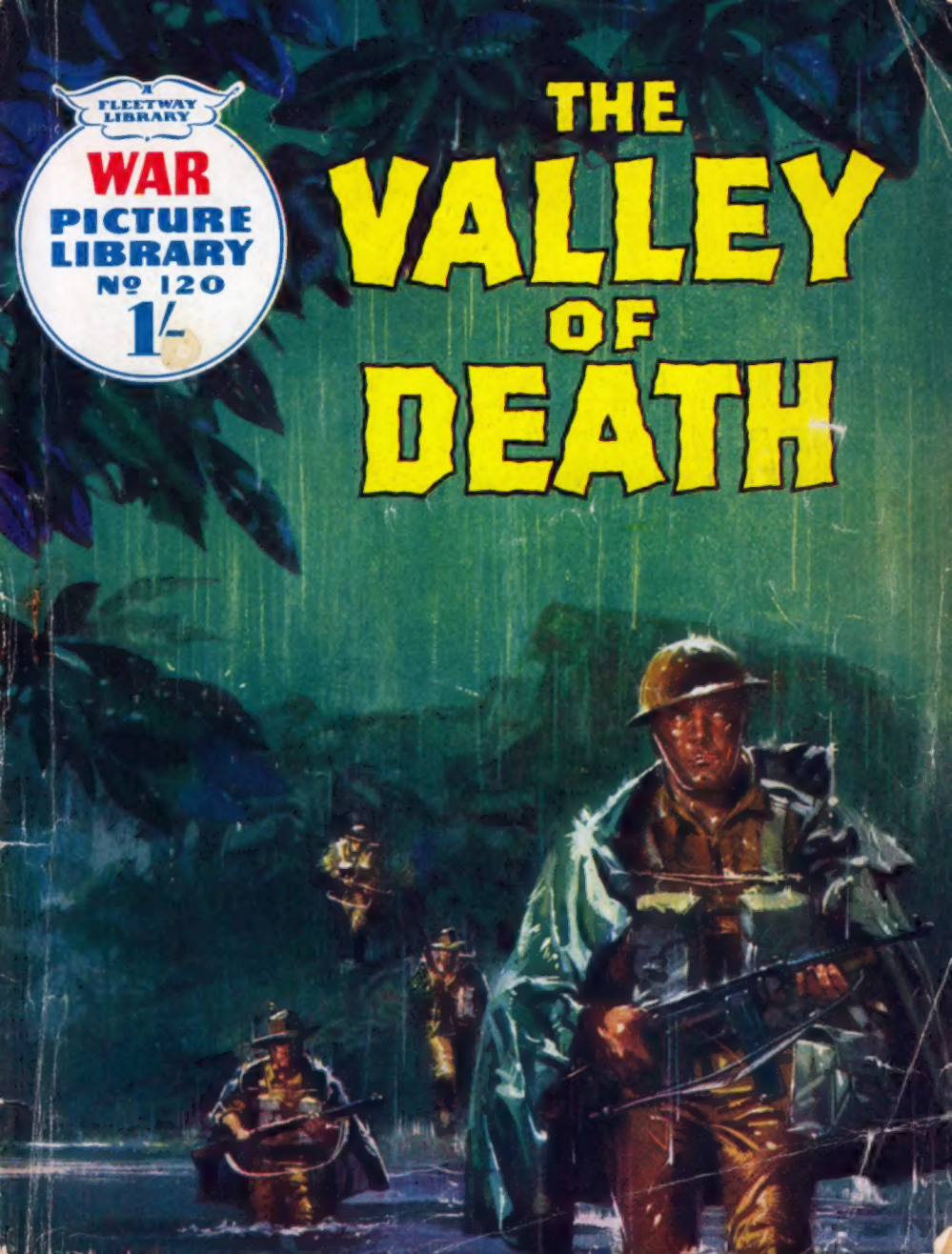
THE VALLEY OF DEATH



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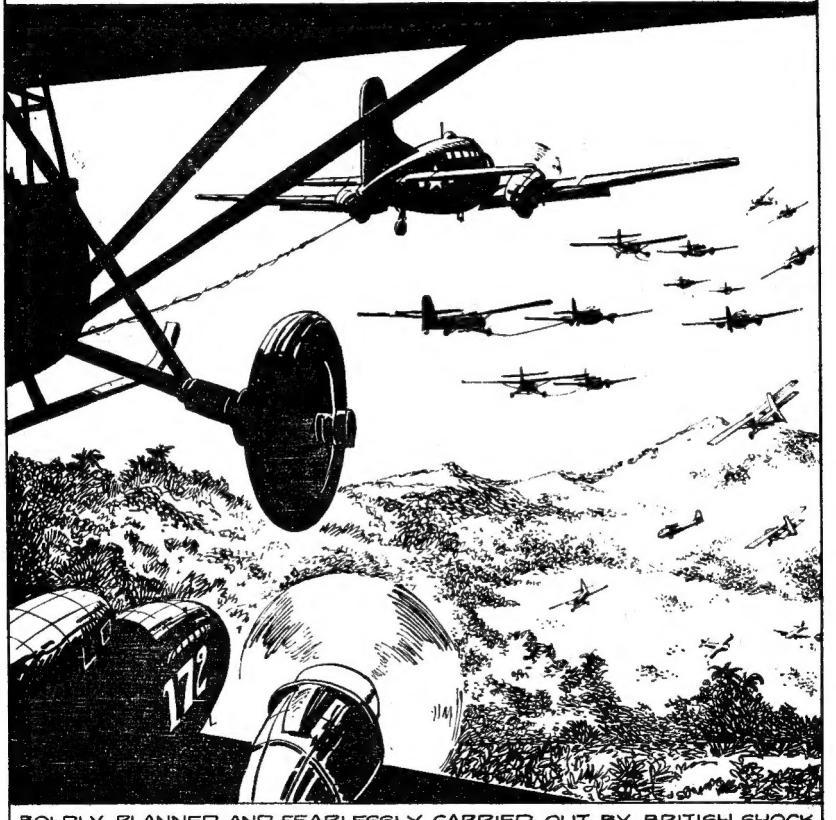
THE VALLEY OF DEATH

IT WAS IN MARCH 1944 THAT THE FREE WORLD FIRST HEARD OF THAT EPIC AIRBORNE INVASION OF JAP-INFESTED BURMA JUNGLE—*OPERATION BROADWAY*...



BOLDLY PLANNED AND FEARLESSLY CARRIED OUT BY BRITISH SHOCK TROOPS USING AMERICAN-MANNED DAKOTAS, THIS SEIZURE OF A CLEARING TO MAKE AN AIRSTRIP BEHIND ENEMY LINES WAS TO PROVE A TRIUMPH OF ANGLO-AMERICAN TEAMWORK.

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Chapter 1. SURVEY PARTY

THE TASK OF JOHN LOCKE AND HIS PARTY WAS TO ACT AS BODYGUARD TO ONE MAN ABOARD THAT PLANE, AN ENGINEER WHO WAS TO JUDGE THE SUITABILITY OF THE JUNGLE LANDING PLACE.

AS THE AIRCRAFT CLIMBED SLOWLY TO CLEAR THE SOMRA HILLS, LOCKE TRIED TO GAUGE THE CHARACTER OF THEIR CHARGE, AN IRISH-AMERICAN, MAJOR PATRICK O'HARA, OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE.

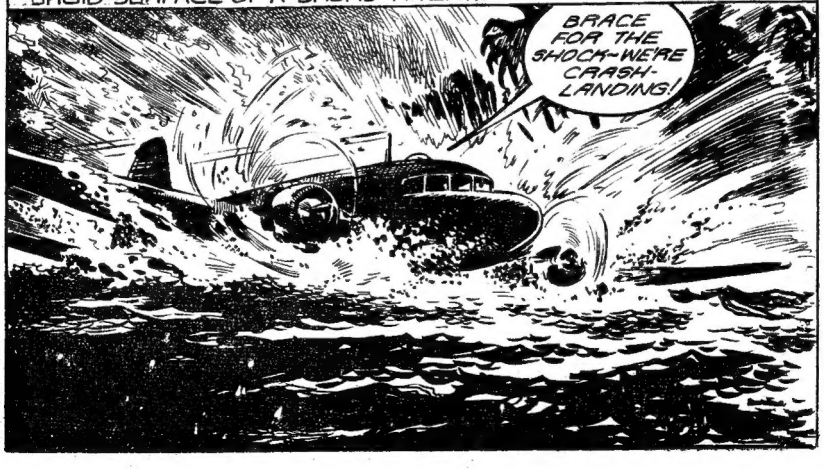
LOCKE'S STEADY GREY EYES DROPPED TO THE WATERPROOF MAP CASE IN O'HARA'S MUSCULAR GRASP...
I SUPPOSE ENGINEERS MUST HAVE THEIR MAPS... BUT IF THAT CASE WERE TO FALL INTO ENEMY HANDS...

O'HARA WAS QUICK TO READ THE MEANING IN THE OTHER'S CENSORIOUS LOOK.
BAD SECURITY, EH, CAPTAIN? BUT IF I'M TO FIGURE WAYS OF LANDING AIRCRAFT ON THIS CRAZY CLEARING, I'VE GOT TO HAVE NOTES!
JOHN LOCKE SENSED THE RUGGED INDEPENDENCE OF THE MAN~AND THE HINT OF AN IRISH TEMPER...

THE DAKOTA HAD CLEARED THE SOMRA RANGE WHEN A WARNING SHOUT CAME FROM THE PILOT'S CABIN...
HOLD ON TO YOUR SEATS, LADS ~ A JAP ZERO!

FLAME FLASHING FROM ITS GUN PORTS, THE ZERO BORE IN AND THE CLUMSY DAKOTA WAS A GREAT BARN OF A TARGET TO THE FAST, DEADLY FIGHTER...

BUT NO AMOUNT OF DESPERATE MANOEUVRES COULD AVOID THE SAVAGELY ACCURATE BURSTS OF JAP FIRE. THE SWEATING PILOT WAS FORCED TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THE THICK JUNGLE AND THE TURGID SURFACE OF A BROAD RIVER...



IN A MOMENT, WATER WAS SURGING INTO THE BROKEN FUSELAGE AND, DAZED AND BRUISED, THE MEN BEGAN A WILD SCRAMBLE FOR THE DOOR.
EASY, MEN— EASY! THERE'S SEVERAL MINUTES BEFORE SHE SINKS!

FIGHTING DOWN HIS OWN DISMAY, CAPTAIN LOCKE SAW EVERY MAN OUT AND THEN FOLLOWED HIMSELF. ANOTHER CRACKLE OF JAP MACHINE-GUNS RANG OVER THE WATER AND AS LOCKE TURNED HIS HEAD, HE SAW THE PILOT AND CO-PILOT CRUMPLE UNDER A HAIL OF LEAD.
NEXT SECOND, BOTH MEN WERE LOST TO SIGHT IN THE SWIRLING CURRENT.

BEFORE THE JAP PILOT COULD CIRCLE TO REPEAT HIS MURDEROUS ATTACK, LOCKE AND HIS MEN HAD REACHED THE BANK, PANTING FROM HIS EXERTIONS, THE CAPTAIN COULD STILL UTTER THE ONE QUESTION UPPERMOST IN HIS MIND...
THE MAP CASE, O'HARA? WHERE IS IT?
FOR PETE'S SAKE! BACK IN THE PLANE-IT'LL SINK WITH IT, I GUESS!
LOCKE CHOKED BACK HIS ANGER WITH DIFFICULTY...

LISTEN, MAJOR, THIS IS THE END OF THE MONSOON RAINS. SOON, THIS RIVER WILL DRY UP TO A TRICKLE AND THAT PLANE WILL STAND HIGH AND DRY. IF THE JAPS FIND THAT MAP CASE, THEN 'OPERATION BROADWAY' IS AS GOOD AS FINISHED!

O'HARA WAS ABOUT TO MAKE A HOT RETORT WHEN THERE CAME A RATTLE OF SHOTS.
JAPS!
THEY'RE ON TO US!

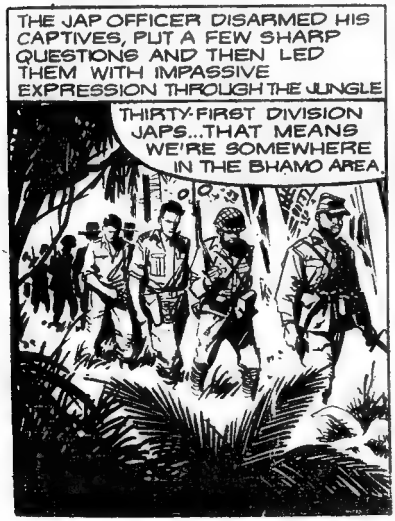
FROM THE SCANT COVER OF FALLEN LOGS, THEY FIRED BACK AT THE ENEMY CONCEALED ON THE NEARBY SLOPES.
AIM LOW AT THE FLASHES!
YOU DON'T HAVE TO TEACH ME HOW TO SHOOT RATS!

BY ILL LUCK, THEY HAD CRASHED WITHIN SIGHT OF A STRONG ENEMY PATROL...
DO NOT KILL ALL..WE TAKE SOME PRISONER!

ONE AFTER ANOTHER, THE CHINDITS WERE PICKED OFF BY THE JAPS IN THEIR BETTER POSITION UNTIL MAJOR O'HARA GAVE A STRANGLED CRY OF FEAR.
GOT TO GIVE IN, LOCKE... THIS IS PLAIN SUICIDE!
SURRENDER-NEVER! WE'LL HAVE TO DROP BACK AND LOSE OURSELVES IN THE JUNGLE!

BUT, NEXT MOMENT, O'HARA SPRANG TO HIS FEET AND STARTED TO WAVE A WHITE HANDKERCHIEF. LOCKE SNATCHED FURIOUSLY AT IT..
WHAT THE DEVIL...! GET DOWN, YOU FOOL!
YOU WANT US ALL KILLED? I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING!

IN THE BATTLE OF WILLS BETWEEN THE TWO SPIRITED MEN, THE ONE IRISH AND HEADSTRONG, THE OTHER ENGLISH AND STUBBORN, THE CHANCE TO SLIP AWAY AS LOCKE HAD INTENDED WAS LOST....
I SAID WE HADN'T A CHANCE! LOOK, THERE'S TOO MANY OF 'EM FOR US!


THE JAP OFFICER DISARMED HIS CAPTIVES, PUT A FEW SHARP QUESTIONS AND THEN LED THEM WITH IMPASSIVE EXPRESSION THROUGH THE JUNGLE
THIRTY-FIRST DIVISION JAPS...THAT MEANS WE'RE SOMEWHERE IN THE BHAMO AREA.

THEY WERE STILL ON THE MOVE AT NIGHTFALL, AND THE JAPANESE OFFICER SIGNALLED TO MAKE CAMP. LOCKE EDGED CLOSE TO O'HARA...
THERE'S BOUND TO BE QUESTIONING.. AND IT MAY NOT BE NICE. BUT ONLY YOU AND I KNOW THE TRUE REASON FOR THIS MISSION.
SO WHAT?
SO WE SAY SO~BUT NO MORE. THEN MAYBE THE MEN WILL BE SPARED THE TREATMENT.

BY MID-MORNING, THE PRISONERS HAD ARRIVED AT A JAPANESE HEADQUARTERS WHERE THEY WERE THRUST BEFORE A SILKILY-SMILING JAPANESE COMMANDER.
MY MEN KNOW NOTHING...ABSOLUTELY NOTHING!
REST ASSURED, MY DEAR CAPTAIN- WE SHALL LEARN WHAT IS TO BE LEARNED!

BRUTALLY-WIELDED RIFLE BUTTS HERDED THEM ALL FROM THE ROOM...
WITH MUCH PLEASURE, MY COLONEL!
GIVE THE PRISONERS THE USUAL-AH, TREATMENT! INFORM ME WHEN THEY ARE READY TO TALK.

BUT AT THE END OF THE SAVAGE INTERROGATION, THE SPIRIT OF EVERY CAPTIVE REMAINED UNBROKEN . . .

JOHN LOCKE AND THE AMERICAN WERE FLUNG INTO A TRUCK AFTER THE OTHERS AND CARRIED AWAY ON A ROUGH ROAD THAT PRESENTLY JARRED THEM TO PAIN-FILLED CONSCIOUSNESS . . .
I COULDN'T STAND THAT AGAIN! NEXT TIME I'LL HAVE TO TELL!
TAKE IT EASY, O'HARA. MAYBE THE WORST IS OVER

AT A PRISON CAMP SOME FORTY MILES EAST, THEY WEARILY CLAMBERED DOWN TO JOIN THE PITIFUL WRECKS OF HUMANITY THAT HAD ONCE BEEN FIGHTING SOLDIERS OF THE ALLIES . . .

THE NEWLY-ARRIVED P.O.W.S WERE PARADED BEFORE A CORPULENT JAPANESE OFFICER WHO SURVEYED THEM SILENTLY FOR A FEW MOMENTS. THEN..

JOHN LOCKE AND O'HARA WERE PUSHED FORWARD AT A COMMAND AND ANSWERED THE JAP'S SIMPLE QUESTIONS
SO, AN ENGINEER? THAT IS GOOD THING. YOU COME WITH ME...

LATER, THE AMERICAN REJOINED LOCKE IN THE HUT THEY WERE TO SHARE...
SEEMS WE WORK A COAL MINE DUG INTO THE HILLS. BUT IT NEEDS A CIVIL ENGINEER. THAT'S WHERE I COME IN. I'LL FIX THINGS GOOD~ FOR US BOTH!
THEN COUNT ME OUT... I'LL TAKE WHAT EVERY OTHER MAN TAKES!
OKAY, SUIT YOURSELF!

THE CAREFREE REPLY STUNG LOCKE TO A FIERCE RETORT...
LISTEN, O'HARA, IT'S OUR DUTY TO ESCAPE!
NO TALK!
OH, YEAH~ AND GET CAUGHT AND HAVE YOUR EARS LOPPED OFF! NOT FOR ME, THANKS!

Chapter 2. TUNNEL of DREAD

NO STOP WORK, WHITE DOG!
STEADY...

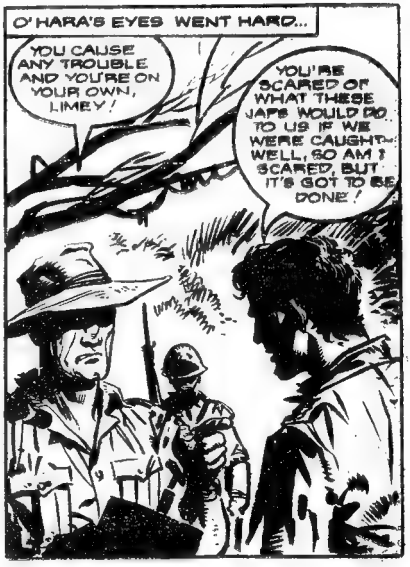
THE NEXT MOMENT, THE GUARD'S RIFLE BUTT SWUNG VICIOUSLY AND LOCKE FELT HIS KNEES JACKKNIFE LIKE STRAWS...
AGH!

BLACK INSENSIBILITY WOULD HAVE CLOSED OVER JOHN LOCKE HAD NOT THE ICY CHILL OF THE WATER BROUGHT A SHOCK RECOVERY. WEAKLY, HE CLAWED AT THE FIRM GROUND...

ALMOST BLINDED BY THE PAIN, LOCKE'S HEAD CAME UP SLOWLY AT THE SOUND OF COLONEL KOMOTU'S FLAT ORIENTAL VOICE. STANDING BESIDE THE JAP WAS O'HARA...
HAVE COURAGE, CAPTAIN LOCKE... SOON THINGS MUCH BETTER.
HE MEANS WE'LL GET THIS WATER AWAY. THAT'S GOING TO BE MY JOB.

OVERNIGHT, THE AMERICAN MUST HAVE HAD PANGS OF CONSCIENCE FOR THE NEXT MORNING HE SOUGHT TO GIVE LOCKE RELIEF FROM THE COALMINE BY ASKING FOR HIS ASSISTANCE. HE HAD TO MAKE A SURVEY OF THE VALLEY...
I TOLD KOMOTU I COULD CLEAR THE WATER FROM THAT MINE BY TUNNELLING... I HOPE I'M RIGHT!
I HOPED YOU'D GOT SOMETHING ELSE IN MIND!

AFTER AN HOUR'S TEDIOUS SEARCHING, O'HARA AT LAST SEEMED SATISFIED, BUT NOT SO HIS IMPATIENT COMPANION...
IF MY CALCULATIONS ARE CORRECT, THIS SHOULD BE A GOOD SPOT FOR A TEST.
YOU MEAN A GOOD SPOT TO MAKE A DIVE FOR IT. I'LL FIX THIS GUARD!


O'HARA'S EYES WENT HARD...
YOU CAUSE ANY TROUBLE AND YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN, LIMEY!
YOU'RE SCARED OF WHAT THESE JAPS WOULD DO TO US IF WE WERE CAUGHT... WELL, SO AM I SCARED, BUT IT'S GOT TO BE DONE!

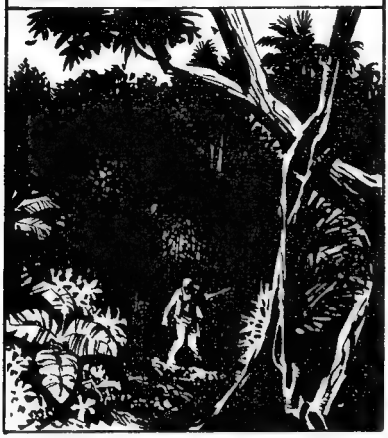
CASUALLY, LOCKE PICKED UP A SPADE... THEN EXPLODED INTO SAVAGE ACTION!
STOP, YOU CRAZY FOOL!
UNLUCKILY, A MUSCULAR REACTION TRIGGERED THE JAP'S RIFLE WITH A CRACK THAT ECHOED UP AND DOWN THE VALLEY

THE AMERICAN BEGAN TO RAGE HYSTERICALLY- UNTIL LOCKE GRABBED HIM BELLIGERENTLY...
NOW, ARE YOU COMING- OR HAVE I GOT TO MAKE YOU?
YOU MUST BE MAD..THAT JUNGLE WOULD KILL US! YOU HAVEN'T GOT A HOPE OF GETTING AWAY!

SUDDENLY, SHRILL CRIES SOUNDER FROM THE JUNGLE~CUTTING SHORT THEIR WRANGLING.
JAP GUARDS! THEY HEARD THE SHOT!
IDIOT! FOOL! NOW WE'LL BE MURDERED!

LEAVING O'HARA CURSING DESPAIRINGLY, JOHN LOCKE LEAPED INTO COVER AND LED THE YELLING PURSUIT INTO THE DEPTHS OF THE JUNGLE AND SWAMPS...

SOMEHOW, HE SLIPPED HIS MERCILESS HUNTERS IN THOSE FIRST FEW TENSE HOURS OF FREEDOM AND BEGAN THE GRUELLING TREK FOR FAR-OFF FRIENDLY LINES...



BY THE FOURTH DAY HIS STRENGTH, ALREADY AFFECTED BY JAP ILL-TREATMENT, BEGAN TO FAIL...BUT NEVER HIS INDOMITABLE SPIRIT. WHERE STAMINA FAILED, HIS WITS TOOK OVER...

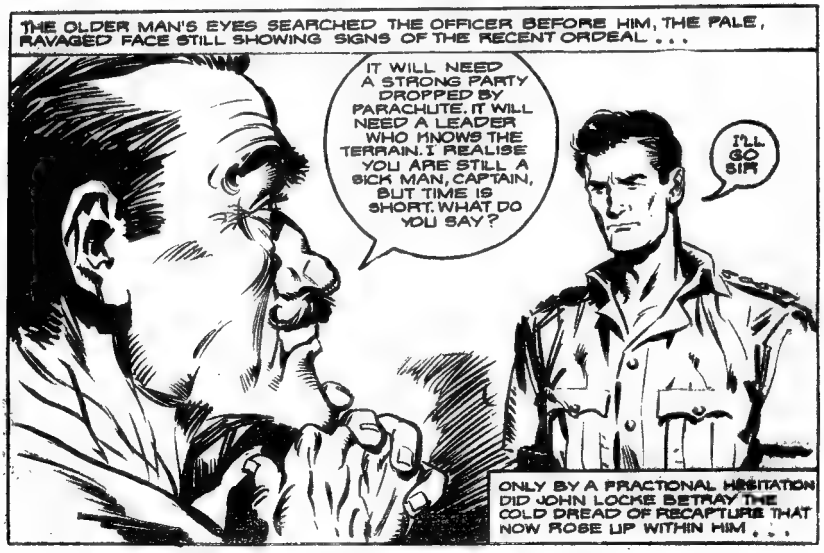
THE SWIFT-RUNNING WATER CARRIED HIM UNDER TEARING THORN BUSHES AND OVER BRUISING STONES UNTIL HE GLIMPSED FIGURES ON THE BANK, IN UNIFORMS HE RECOGNISED. WEARILY, HE GROPED HIS WAY ASHORE...

THE SOUND OF THE FAMILIAR TONGUE WAS LIKE MUSIC TO THE EARS OF THE EXHAUSTED OFFICER.

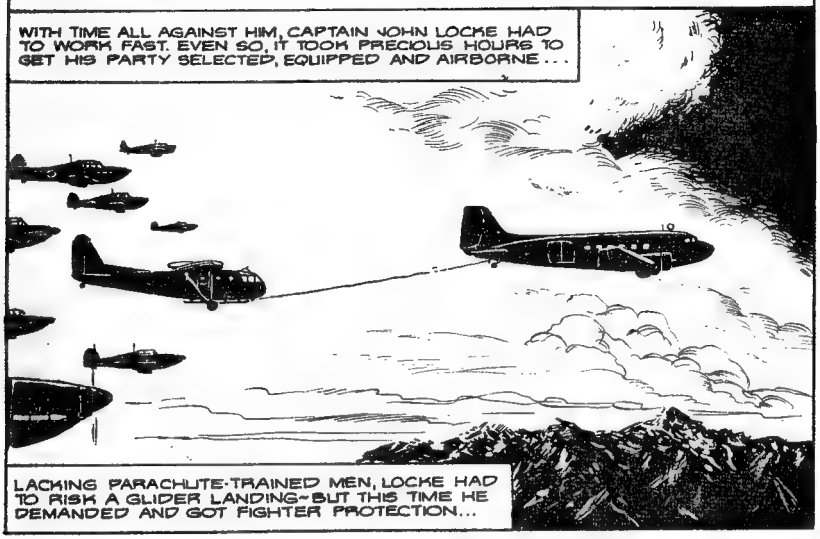
HE WAS TAKEN TO REGIMENTAL SICK-QUARTERS WHERE, AS A RESULT OF A SIGNAL HE INSISTED ON SENDING, HE WAS SOON VISITED BY THE CORPS COMMANDER HIMSELF. GRAVELY, GENERAL OLDHAM LISTENED TO LOCKE'S STORY...
THIS IS SERIOUS NEWS, LOCKE— BUT SURELY, O'HARA'S MAP CASE WILL BE RUINED BY WATER?
IT WAS WATERPROOF, SIR, AND STRONGLY BUILT. IT COULD STILL BE INTACT WITH NOTES ON OPERATION BROADWAY WRITTEN INSIDE FOR ALL TO READ.

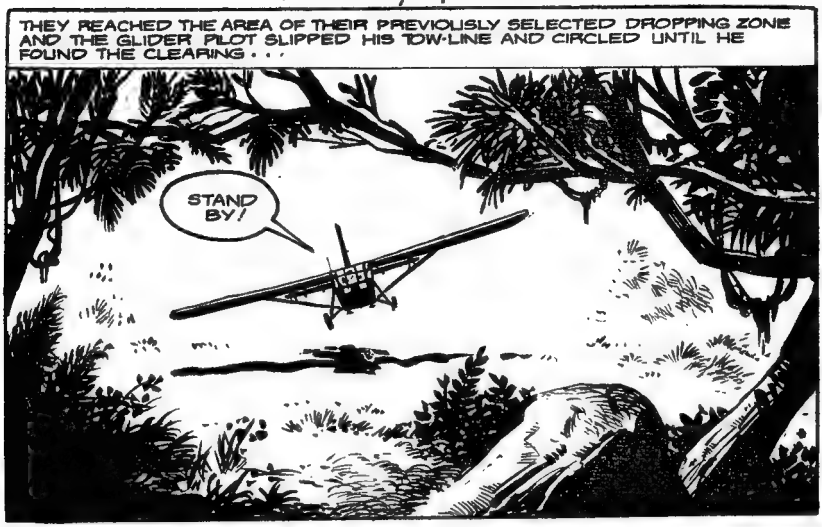
A DAY LATER, JOHN LOCKE WAS FEELING WELL ENOUGH TO REPORT TO THE GENERAL AT CORPS HEADQUARTERS...
YOU'RE RIGHT ABOUT THAT RIVER, LOCKE. AN AIR RECCE REPORTS IT TO BE DROPPING RAPIDLY. IN A MATTER OF DAYS, THE DAKOTA MAY WELL BEGIN SHOWING ABOVE THE SURFACE!
IT COULDN'T HAVE BEEN MORE THAN TWENTY FEET DOWN, SIR!

THE GENERAL'S TONE BECAME CRISP AND DECISIVE . .
TWO THINGS MUST BE DONE, CAPTAIN LOCKE. ONE IS TO DESTROY THE DAKOTA AND ITS CONTENTS—THE OTHER IS TO RESCUE MAJOR O'HARA FROM THE JAPANESE PRISON CAMP. HE KNOWS TOO MUCH.'

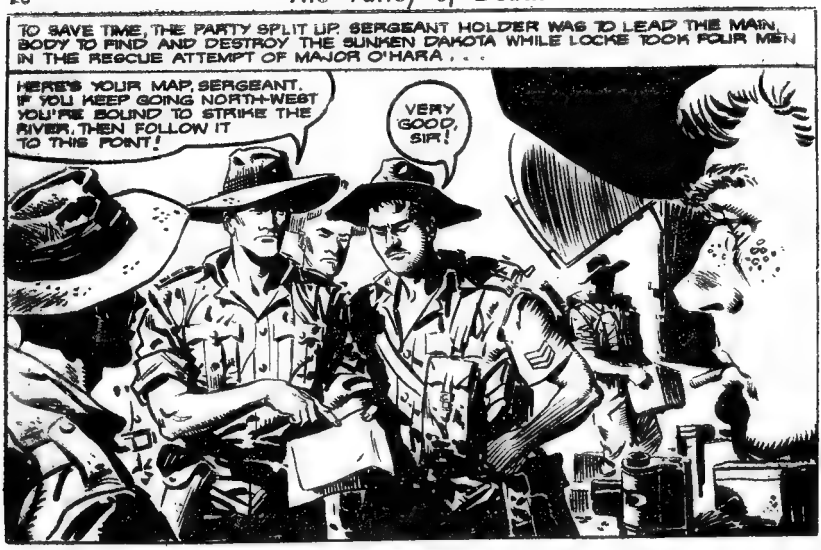

THE OLDER MAN'S EYES SEARCHED THE OFFICER BEFORE HIM, THE PALE, RAVAGED FACE STILL SHOWING SIGNS OF THE RECENT ORDEAL . . .
IT WILL NEED A STRONG PARTY DROPPED BY PARACHUTE. IT WILL NEED A LEADER WHO KNOWS THE TERRAIN. I REALISE YOU ARE STILL A SICK MAN, CAPTAIN, BUT TIME IS SHORT. WHAT DO YOU SAY?
I'LL GO SIR
ONLY BY A FRACTIONAL HESITATION DID JOHN LOCKE BETRAY THE COLD DREAD OF RECAPTURE THAT NOW ROSE UP WITHIN HIM . . .

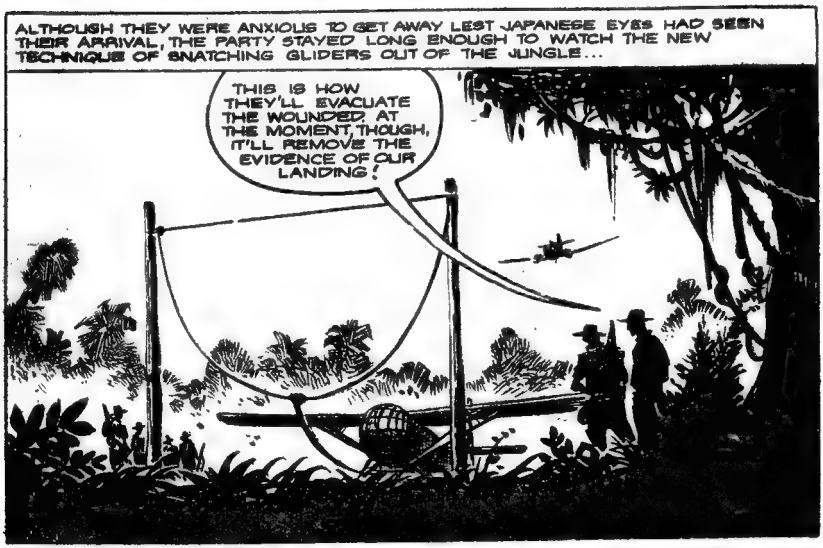
Chapter 3. RETURN to PERIL




THEY REACHED THE AREA OF THEIR PREVIOUSLY SELECTED DROPPING ZONE AND THE GLIDER PILOT SLIPPED HIS TOW-LINE AND CIRCLED UNTIL HE FOUND THE CLEARING . . .
STAND BY!

THE LANDING WAS ROUGH BUT SAFE. THE GLIDER'S NOSE HINGED OPEN AND LOCHE SET FOOT ON ENEMY SOIL AGAIN...
RIGHT... OUT YOU COME, MEN!


TO SAVE TIME, THE PARTY SPLIT UP. SERGEANT HOLDER WAS TO LEAD THE MAIN BODY TO FIND AND DESTROY THE SUNKEN DAKOTA WHILE LOCKE TOOK FOUR MEN IN THE RESCUE ATTEMPT OF MAJOR O'HARA . . .
HERE'S YOUR MAP, SERGEANT. IF YOU KEEP GOING NORTH-WEST YOU'RE BOUND TO STRIKE THE RIVER. THEN FOLLOW IT TO THIS POINT!
VERY GOOD, SIR!


ALTHOUGH THEY WERE ANXIOUS TO GET AWAY LEST JAPANESE EYES HAD SEEN THEIR ARRIVAL, THE PARTY STAYED LONG ENOUGH TO WATCH THE NEW TECHNIQUE OF SNATCHING GLIDERS OUT OF THE JUNGLE...
THIS IS HOW THEY'LL EVACUATE THE WOUNDED. AT THE MOMENT, THOUGH, IT'LL REMOVE THE EVIDENCE OF OUR LANDING!

WITH AN EAR-DRUMMING ROAR, THE DAKOTA SWOOPED DOWN AND NEATLY HOOKED THE STRETCHED LINE. SECONDS LATER, THE GLIDER WAS SNATCHED FORWARD ALONG THE GROUND AND INTO THE AIR . . .

AGREEING A MEETING PLACE, SERGEANT HOLDER SET OFF WITH HIS PARTY WHILE CAPTAIN LOCKE TOOK HIS FOUR MEN AND STRUCK DUE EAST...
FOR THESE TOUGH YOUNG SOLDIERS IT WAS A PHYSICAL CHALLENGE BUT FOR JOHN LOCKE IT WAS THE ACID TEST OF MORAL FIBRE AS WELL . . .

WITH STRONG ARMS TAKING TURNS AT HACKING A PATH, LOCKE FOUND THE GOING SWIFT COMPARED WITH HIS OWN TOILING TREK TO FREEDOM. IN THREE DAYS, THEIR STRENUOUS EFFORTS WERE REWARDED.
DID YOU HEAR THAT, SIR? AN EXPLOSION OF SOME SORT!
DYNAMITING! WE'RE GETTING NEAR THE COALMINE I TOLD YOU ABOUT.

WITH INNER TENSIONS RISING SHARPER STILL, JOHN LOCKE TOOK OUT HIS POCKET SPY-GLASS...
THAT'S IT~ THE JAPS ARE BLASTING A TUNNEL TO DRAIN OFF THE WATER IN THE MINE. THAT'S MAJOR O'HARA'S IDEA~ IF HE'S STILL ALIVE!

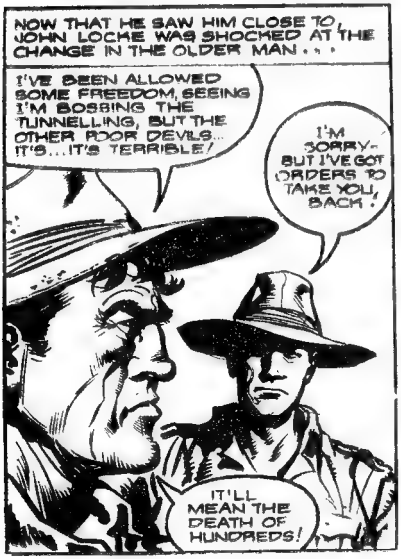
LOCKE SLOWLY SWUNG HIS SPY-GLASS OVER THE FAMILIAR SCENE OF EMACIATED, HARD DRIVEN PRISONERS, A SIGHT THAT BROUGHT A DREAD CHILL... AND THEN SETTLED ON A PAIR OF CLOSE-TALKING FIGURES...
THERE'S O'HARA... AND THAT DEVIL, KOMUTU...

HALF AN HOUR LATER, JOHN LOCKE HAD CRAWLED WITHIN EARSHOT~ THEN PATIENTLY WAITED UNTIL O'HARA WAS SEPARATED FROM THE OTHERS...
O'HARA~ LOCKE, HERE!
GOOD GRIEF! CAPTAIN LOCKE! IT CAN'T BE!

THE LOOK OF AMAZEMENT ON O'HARA'S FACE HAD REPLACED SWIFTLY BY ONE OF FEAR...
LISTEN, O'HARA! I'VE RISKED MY NECK TO COME BACK AND GET YOU AWAY... AND THIS TIME, YOU'RE COMING!
NO, NO.. IT'S IMPOSSIBLE! HOMOTU IS A FIEND. BECAUSE YOU ESCAPED HE GAVE US HELL. NEXT TIME, HE'LL KILL WITHOUT MERCY!

SEEING A GUARD APPROACH, O'HARA DROPPED HIS VOICE TO A HOARSE WHISPER...
I-I CAN'T STOP NOW. WE'LL TALK LATER.. UP THE HILL.. I'LL TRY TO GET AWAY!

THAT AFTERNOON, LOCKE AND TWO OF HIS MEN WAITED IMPATIENTLY ON THE JUNGLE-CLAD HILLSIDE...
LOOK, SIR, SOMEONE COMING! IS IT MAJOR O'HARA?
YES, THAT'S HIM! OKAY, LEAVE THIS TO ME AND KEEP A SHARP LOOK-OUT!


NOW THAT HE SAW HIM CLOSE TO, JOHN LOCKE WAS SHOCKED AT THE CHANGE IN THE OLDER MAN...
I'VE BEEN ALLOWED SOME FREEDOM, SEEING I'M BOSSING THE TUNNELLING, BUT THE OTHER POOR DEVILS... IT'S...IT'S TERRIBLE!
I'M SORRY- BUT I'VE GOT ORDERS TO TAKE YOU BACK!
IT'LL MEAN THE DEATH OF HUNDREDS!

JOHN LOCKE HAD ALREADY THOUGHT OVER THIS KNOTTY PROBLEM...
THEN WE'LL HAVE TO FIX IT SO THAT THE JAPS THINK YOU HAVE BEEN KILLED IN SOME WAY- LET'S SAY, BY DYNAMITING!

IT TOOK A GREAT DEAL OF INSISTENCE BEFORE O'HARA WOULD AGREE TO CO-OPERATE. ONLY THEN, DID HE LEAD THEM TO A HOLE, FRESHLY DUG.
THIS IS AN AIR SHAFT LEADING DOWN TO THE TUNNEL WHERE WE'RE DYNAMITING. I SUPPOSE I COULD USE IT TO GET AWAY!
THAT'S FINE! NOW ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS TO FAKE YOUR DEATH IN THE TUNNEL!
WHAT HAPPENS EACH TIME YOU DYNAMITE, O'HARA?
WELL, I MAKE SURE EVERY MAN HAS QUIT THE TUNNEL... THEN I LIGHT THE FUSE... AND RUN!
GOOD, NOW LISTEN TO ME...

O'HARA LEFT, AND LOCKE AND HIS PARTY STAYED WAITING, THEIR EYES NEVER LEAVING THE ANT-LIKE ACTIVITY OF THE PRISONERS WORKING NEAR THE TUNNEL MOUTH . . .
THERE, SIR— THAT LOOKS LIKE MISTER O'HARA!
YOU'RE RIGHT! HE'S GOING INTO THE TUNNEL TO DO MORE BLASTING. THIS COULD BE IT!

WITH PALE, SET FACE, O'HARA LED HIS PARTY OF WORKERS TO THE FAR END OF THE TUNNEL. THERE HE DRILLED AND INSERTED STICKS OF DYNAMITE, THEN TURNED TO HIS FELLOW PRISONERS AND THE JAP GUARD.
ALL RIGHT, EVERYBODY BACK. I'M GOING TO LIGHT THE FUSE!

LEFT ALL ALONE, O'HARA PUT A LIGHT TO THE FUSE... AN EXTRA LONG FUSE, THIS TIME...
GOT TO HAVE TIME TO SHIN UP THAT AIR SHAFT.

OUTSIDE THE TUNNEL, THE MOMENTS TICKED BY WHILE ALL WATCHED THE ENTRANCE EXPECTANTLY...
MAJOR O'HARA LONG TIME COME!

TEN SECONDS LATER...
THE DYNAMITE~ SHE GOES!
AND SO DOES THE BUNGLING MAJOR O'HARA~ TO HIS UNDISTINGUISHED ANCESTORS!
BUT COLONEL KOMOTU WAS NOT THE ONLY ONE WHO WATCHED IN VAIN FOR THE AMERICAN MAJOR...
THAT DYNAMITE WENT OFF MINUTES AGO. THE MAJOR SHOULD HAVE CLIMBED UP THIS SHAFT BY NOW!
MAYBE HE'S IN TROUBLE DOWN THERE, SIR...

JOHN LOCKE BEGAN TO LOWER HIMSELF INTO THE AIR-SHAFT...
LET'S HOPE THE JAPS DON'T GET TO HIM BEFORE I DO!

LOCKE WORKED HIS WAY DOWN THE AIR SHAFT, BRACING HIMSELF AGAINST THE ROUGHLY DUG WALLS. SOON, HE FELT HIS FEET SWING CLEAR AS HE GAINED THE TUNNEL . . .

WITH A GRUNT OF RELIEF, HE FOUND THAT O'HARA HAD SUSTAINED NOTHING WORSE THAN A CRACK ON THE HEAD. BUT NEXT MOMENT, HE HEARD THE DISTANT CLATTER OF STUMBLING FEET...
JAPS!
THREE OF THE GUARDS HAD BEEN SENT INTO THE TUNNEL TO INVESTIGATE BY THE FURIOUS JAP COMMANDER...
DON'T SHOOT... IT'LL ONLY MAKE IT WORSE FOR US ALL!
WHAT... AND BE CAUGHT? NO THANKS!

THE GUARDS DID NOT SEE THE TWO MEN HIDDEN IN THE SHADOWS - UNTIL TOO LATE. LOCHE'S FINGER TIGHTENED ON THE TRIGGER...

ONE GUARD FELL BUT BEFORE THE OTHERS COULD TAKE AIM, THERE WAS A SULLEN RUMBLE WHICH GREW TO A ROAR AS A SECTION OF THE ROOF, ALREADY WEAKENED BY THE DYNAMITE, CAVED IN UPON THEM . . .

IT TAXED O'HARA'S DWINDLING STRENGTH TO THE UTMOST TO FOLLOW JOHN LOCKE UP THE AIR-SHAFT, AND HE HAD TO BE LIFTED OUT INTO THE OPEN...
QUICKLY, LET'S GET HIM OUT, WE DAREN'T HANG AROUND!

TWO OF THE MEN HAD TO CARRY THE AMERICAN AS THE PARTY SET OFF FOR THE GREEN COVER OF THE JUNGLE.
ONE THING— THAT ROOF FALLING IN SHOULD CONVINCE KOMOTU THAT O'HARA'S DEAD!

THE GET-AWAY WENT SMOOTHLY AND WITHOUT ALARMS: ONLY THE WEAK AND COMPLAINING O'HARA PROVED A HANDICAP...
THIS JUNGLE'S A KILLER...WE'LL NEVER MAKE IT.

FOR A DAY AND A HALF, LOCKE LED THEM BY EASY STAGES UNTIL THEY ARRIVED AT THE SPOT WHERE THEY WERE TO BE REJOINED BY SERGEANT HOLDER'S PARTY. THE HOURS PASSED IN ANXIOUS WAITING.
LOOK, SIR, SOMEONE COMING.
YOU'RE RIGHT.. AND HE LOOKS PRETTY DONE IN.

AS THE DISHEVELLED FIGURE LURCHED IN DRUNKEN WEARINESS TOWARDS THEM, LOCKE'S HEART SANK. IT WAS CORPORAL SOAMES... AND EVERY LINE ABOUT THAT STUMBLING FIGURE SEEMED TO SPELL BAD NEWS.

GIVEN A STEAMING MUG OF TEA, SOAMES BEGAN TO REVIVE, BUT HIS HALTING STORY ONLY CONFIRMED LOCKE'S MISGIVINGS.
WE GOT TO THE RIVER ALL RIGHT, SIR... AND SAW THE PLANE... IT'S STICKING RIGHT UP BUT WE MUST HAVE BEEN FOLLOWED...THE JAPS HAVE THEM ALL TRAPPED ON THE RIVER BANK.
WHEN WAS THIS?

THE TIRED CORPORAL RUBBED HIS CHIN AND FROWNED AT THE OFFICER'S SHARP QUESTION.
EVERYTHING'S A BIT HAZY, SIR... I LOST MY WAY... LOST COUNT OF TIME...

BUT ALREADY THEIR LEADER HAD MADE UP HIS MIND...
WE MOVE AT FIRST LIGHT, AND MAKE FOR THE RIVER, SERGEANT HOLDER WILL NEED US IF THAT PLANE'S GOING TO BE DESTROYED!
THE PLANE? WHO'S WORRYING ABOUT THAT TARNATION PLANE?

O'HARA STUMBLED FORWARD, PROTESTING IN SELFISH INDIGNATION...
LISTEN HERE, LOCKE, I'M A SICK MAN! YOU'VE GOT TO GET ME BACK TO BASE...
I SAID WE MOVE AT DAYLIGHT, O'HARA, FOR THE RIVER!

IT WAS BARELY LIGHT WHEN THEY SET OUT. DEAF TO THE AMERICAN MAJOR'S PROTESTS, LOCKE LED THEM ON A PUNISHING MARCH UNTIL AT LAST THE GREEN GLOOM OF THE JUNGLE BROKE INTO CLEAR SKIES...
BY HARRY, YES..AND ALREADY HALF OUT OF THE WATER! WE'RE NONE TOO SOON.
THE RIVER.. AND THE PLANE, SIR...LOOK!

LOCKE RANGED THE RIVER BANK BELOW WITH HIS SPYGLASS, UNTIL HE SIGHTED THE CORNERED MEN...
THERE'S HOLDER AND HIS MEN.. AND STILL ALIVE! BUT HE'S IN A TIGHT SPOT ALL RIGHT.

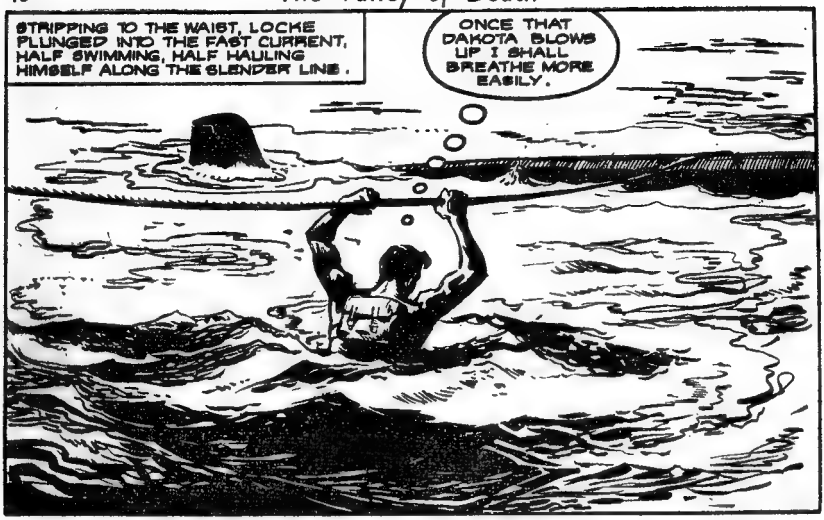
SWIFTLY SIZING UP THE SITUATION, LOCKE LED HIS MEN CAUTIOUSLY DOWN THE SLOPE
PICK YOUR TARGET— FIRE!

THE JAP PARTY FOUND THEMSELVES UNDER FIRE FROM FRONT AND REAR...
ENEMY PATROL BEHIND US!
DOGS OF BRITISH!
SERGEANT HOLDER AND HIS MEN HAD COME CLOSE TO TOTAL EXTINCTION — BUT NOW THEY CHARGED FROM THEIR POSITIONS WITH BLOOD-CHILLING CRIES...
IT MUST BE THE CAPTAIN'S PARTY!
NOW WE'LL PAY THESE JAPS!

THE JAP PATROL WAS STEADILY CUT TO PIECES, EVEN THOUGH THEY FOUGHT WITH FANATICAL FURY...

A FEW MINUTES LATER, LOCKE AND HIS PARTY PICKED THEIR WAY OVER THE TWISTED AND SILENT ENEMY FORMS AND GREETED SERGEANT HOLDER'S MEN ON THE RIVER BANK.
THE LITTLE NIPS GAVE US NO CHANCE TO GET AT THE PLANE, SIR.
NEVER MIND, HOLDER, WE'LL HAVE A CRACK AT THE DAKOTA RIGHT AWAY.

GUESSING THAT THE FAST-EMPTYING RIVER WOULD MAKE SWIMMING DIFFICULT, LOCKE HAD PROVIDED HIS PARTY WITH THE ANSWER... A GRAPPLING LINE...
NOW PULL THE LINE TAUT AND MAKE IT FAST TO A TREE, SERGEANT.
RIGHT, SIR!


STRIPPING TO THE WAIST, LOCKE PLUNGED INTO THE FAST CURRENT, HALF SWIMMING, HALF HAULING HIMSELF ALONG THE SLENDER LINE.
ONCE THAT DAKOTA BLOWS UP I SHALL BREATHE MORE EASILY.

IN A HAVERSACK STRAPPED HIGH ON HIS SHOULDERS, HE CARRIED A DEMOLITION CHARGE.
LOOKS PRETTY BATTERED, BUT THE FUSELAGE IS INTACT.

Chapter 4. DANGEROUS CURRENTS

TWISTING CONVULSIVELY, LOCKE SAW THAT HIS ASSAILANT WAS A HALF-NAKED JAP...

LOCKE LUNGED FORWARD, AND THE KNIFE, INTENDED FOR HIS NECK, STUBBED ITSELF ON HIS HAVERSACK...

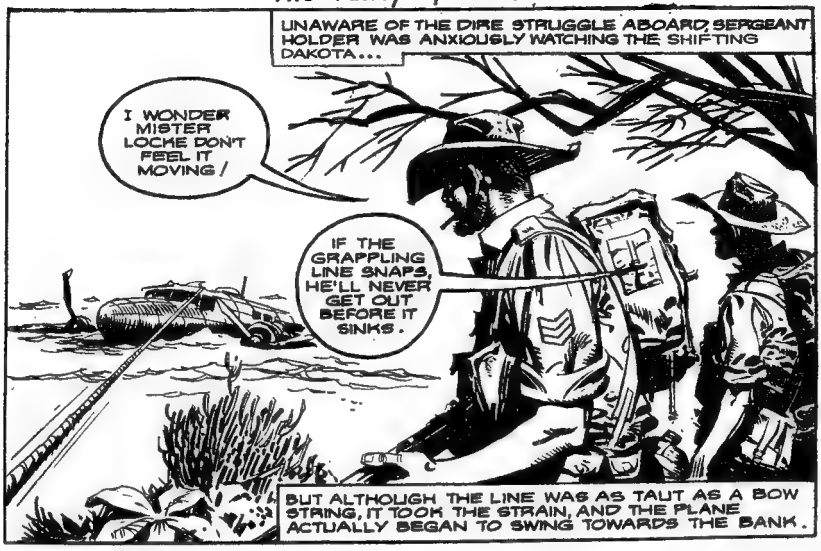
THE FIGHT WENT ON IN SAVAGE SILENCE - BUT THE JAP HAD LOST THE ADVANTAGE OF SURPRISE.

MEANWHILE, A JAPANESE LAUNCH WAS SETTING OUT FROM THE FAR SIDE OF THE RIVER...
LET US LEARN WHAT PRIVATE OSUKO HAS FOUND IN THE AMERICAN AIRPLANE.
ALL FIRING ON THE OTHER SIDE HAS CEASED, MY CAPTAIN. THE ENEMY PATROL MUST HAVE BEEN LIQUIDATED.

THE VIOLENT STRUGGLE IN THE PLANE HAD UNSETTLED IT ON THE MUD BANK AND THE TAIL BEGAN TO SLIP BACK INTO THE WATER...

WITHIN THE CRAZILY LURCHING FRAME, THE STRUGGLE WAS NEARING ITS DEADLY CLIMAX. WITH A MIGHTY EFFORT, LOCKE HAD WRENCHED THE KNIFE FROM HIS ENEMY'S GRASP...

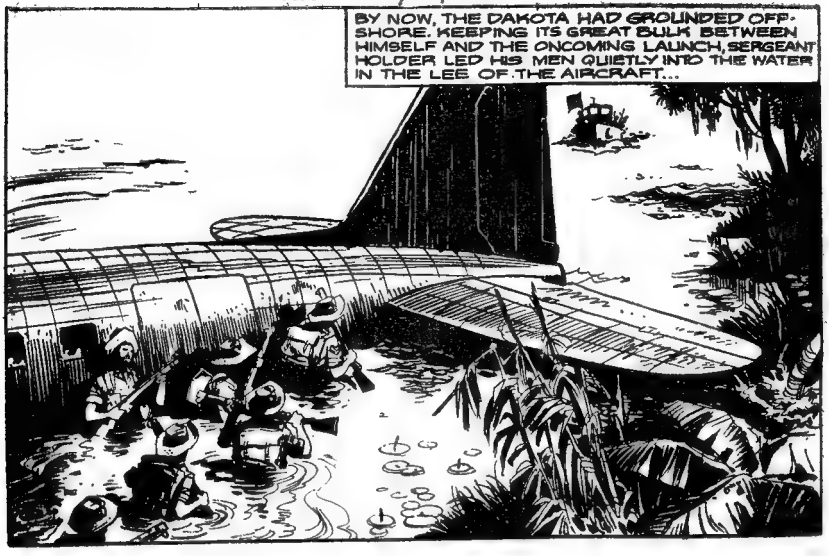
IT WAS A FIGHT TO THE DEATH—ONLY ONE MAN WOULD COME OUT OF THAT PLANE ALIVE...
URGH!


UNAWARE OF THE DIRE STRUGGLE ABOARD, SERGEANT HOLDER WAS ANXIOUSLY WATCHING THE SHIFTING DAKOTA...
I WONDER MISTER LOCHE DON'T FEEL IT MOVING /
IF THE GRAPPLING LINE SNAPS, HE'LL NEVER GET OUT BEFORE IT SINKS.
BUT ALTHOUGH THE LINE WAS AS TAUT AS A BOW STRING, IT TOOK THE STRAIN, AND THE PLANE ACTUALLY BEGAN TO SWING TOWARDS THE BANK.

ANXIOUSLY, BUT FOR A DIFFERENT REASON, THE JAPANESE OFFICER, WAS URGING HIS BOAT TO GREATER SPEED. WITH HIS EYES INTENT ON THE DAKOTA, HOLDER'S MEN ON THE FAR SHORE WENT UNNOTICED...
SPEEDO! HURRY!

INSIDE THE DAKOTA ITSELF, THE ONLY SOUND WAS OF GURGLING WATER. THE FIGHT WAS OVER. SICK AND FAINT, JOHN LOCKE STROVE TO REMUSTER HIS STRENGTH...

IF SERGEANT HOLDER AND HIS MEN HAD SO FAR GONE UNNOTICED, THEIR OWN EYES WERE MAKING NO SUCH ERROR...
A JAP LAUNCH!
THEY COULDN'T HAVE SEEN US...
THEY SOON WILL! FOLLOW ME!


BY NOW, THE DAKOTA HAD GROUNDED OFF-SHORE, KEEPING ITS GREAT BULK BETWEEN HIMSELF AND THE ONCOMING LAUNCH, SERGEANT HOLDER LED HIS MEN QUIETLY INTO THE WATER IN THE LEE OF THE AIRCRAFT...

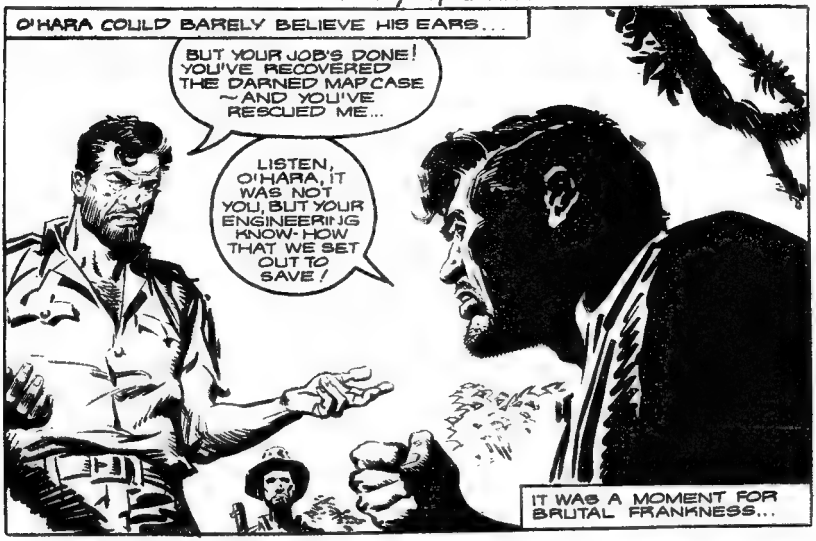
TENSELY THEY WAITED WHILE THE LAUNCH MOVED CLOSER TO THE DAKOTA. THEN THEY OPENED UP...

SUDDEN DEATH SWEPT THE TINY DECK OF THE ENEMY BOAT...
ARGH!
A BRIEF, FANATICAL DEFIANCE BY THE JAPANESE CAPTAIN MET THE SAME RUTHLESS TREATMENT...
THAT MAKES THE LAST OF 'EM!

SERGEANT HOLDER AND HIS MEN THEN SWARMED ABOARD THE AIRCRAFT-TO LIFT THE LIMP CAPTAIN LOCKE TO SAFETY. BACK ON SHORE, HE WAS ABLE TO TELL HIS STORY. THEN SERGEANT HOLDER PUT IN A WORD...
WE FOUND SOMETHING ABOARD THE DAKOTA TO CHEER YOU UP, SIR
YOU MEAN...
SERGEANT HOLDER GRINNED..
THE MISSING MAP CASE, SIR!
AND IN PRETTY GOOD CONDITION, TOO— AS I FEARED. NOW, IF THE JAPS HAD GOT HOLD OF THAT...

BUT A TWANGY VOICE CUT IN ANGRILY..
ALL RIGHT- SO I MADE A MISTAKE. NOW LET'S BURN THE THING AND GET BACK..AND QUICK!
HOLD YOUR HORSES, O'HARA!

O'HARA SUBSIDED INTO SPLUTTERING SILENCE. THEN JOHN LOCKE'S TONES, THOUGH QUIET WITH WEARINESS, SPELT OUT EACH WORD AS IF TO BEAT HOME ITS MEANING...
LISTEN, EVERYBODY- WE'RE NOT GOING HOME - NOT UNTIL MAJOR O'HARA AND I HAVE FINISHED WHAT WE SET OUT TO DO IN THE FIRST PLACE - TO RECONNOITRE BROADWAY CLEARING.
ARE YOU MAD, LOCKE?


O'HARA COULD BARELY BELIEVE HIS EARS...
BUT YOUR JOB'S DONE! YOU'VE RECOVERED THE DARNED MAP CASE ~AND YOU'VE RESCUED ME...
LISTEN, O'HARA, IT WAS NOT YOU, BUT YOUR ENGINEERING KNOW-HOW THAT WE SET OUT TO SAVE!
IT WAS A MOMENT FOR BRUTAL FRANKNESS...

HIS LEADERSHIP NOW UNDISPUTED, THE INDOMITABLE LOCKE INSISTED ON LEAVING AT ONCE. WITH THEM THEY TOOK THE PRECIOUS SURVEYING EQUIPMENT, SALVAGED FROM THE DAKOTA.

BUT AS THE TORTUOUS MILES DRAGGED ON, SO THE ACCUMULATED STRAIN OF THE PAST WEEKS BEGAN TO TELL ON CAPTAIN LOCKE. THEN, AT LONG LAST...
BEAR UP, MISTER LOCKE, WE'RE THERE!
BROADWAY CLEARING! SIGNAL BASE WE'VE ARRIVED, SERGEANT.

RESTING HIS ACHING LIMBS, CAPTAIN LOCKE WASTED NO TIME IN HAVING THE EQUIPMENT UNPACKED. NOW HE TURNED TO O'HARA, FOR WHOM ALL VESTIGE OF RESPECT HAD VANISHED...
NOW, MAJOR O'HARA, YOU WILL EMPLOY THOSE TALENTS WHICH MEN HAVE GIVEN THEIR LIVES TO SAVE.
ANYTHING YOU SAY, CAPTAIN LOCKE.

THE SURVEYING WORK BEGAN. THE VITAL NEED WAS TO KNOW HOW AND WHERE THE ALL-IMPORTANT AIR STRIP WAS TO BE LAID DOWN TO TAKE THE FLOW OF AIRCRAFT BRINGING MEN AND SUPPLIES TO GARRISON BROADWAY. MEANWHILE, CAPTAIN LOCKE'S MEN CARRIED OUT THE ROLE ORIGINALLY GIVEN TO THE ILL-FATED FIRST PARTY – TO ACT AS BODYGUARD.

THE LONG-AWAITED SIGNAL BROUGHT THANKFUL RELIEF TO THE WORRIED GENERAL OLDHAM. AT ONCE HE DESPATCHED A DAKOTA TUG-PLANE AND GLIDER. WITH MUCH THE SAME THANKFULNESS, JOHN LOCKE WATCHED HIS MEN TROOP ABOARD, THEIR JOB FINISHED...

BUT WITH SUDDEN SHRILL CRIES RINGING IN HIS EARS, LOCKE WAS SNATCHED BACK TO THE UGLY PRESENT. IN A FLASH HE HAD STOPPED SERGEANT HOLDER'S LOYAL IMPULSE.
BLIMEY-JAPS! I'LL GET THE MEN!
THERE'S NO TIME! GET BACK! GET GOING!

WAVING LIKE A MADMAN, LOCKE URGED ON THE WAITING DAKOTA. THE POLES AND TUG-LINE WERE ALL READY FOR THE SNATCH...
HE'S SIGNALLING TO TAKE HER AWAY/GOSH, I HOPE HE KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING!

THE FRENZIED SCREAMS OF THE ONCOMING JAPS WERE SUDDENLY DROWNED BY THE DEATH-RATTLE OF JOHN LOCKE'S TOMMY GUN AS HE STROVE DESPERATELY TO KEEP THEM BACK FROM THE GLIDER.

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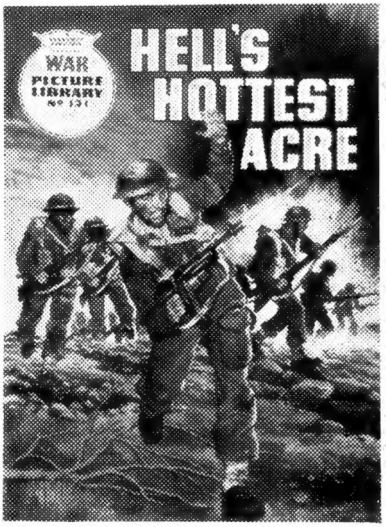

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